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montana committee for the humanities newsletter

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MCH to Consider Benchmarks of Quality

During the past two years NEH has thoroughly reassessed its Division of State Programs. According to Don Gibson, division director, these two years have been among the most challenging since NEH launched the program in 1970. The challenge stems partly from the fact that the state program in the humanities is a unique federal effort. That is, while it is a decentralized program, it pursues national goals. While it empowers and encourages the state councils to fix their own objectives and conduct their own grantmaking programs, at the same time it must answer to Congressional mandates and intent.

This double identity can't help but cause tensions in the program. There is tension between independence and the need for public accountability; tension between the purpose and role of a national, tax-supported state

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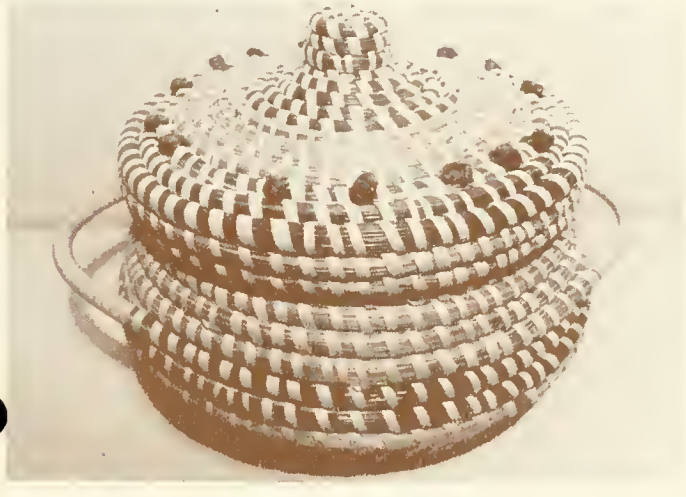
Meaningful Texts, Meaningful Programs

by Burt Feintuch
Kansas Humanities Committee Chair
and Professor of Folklore
Western Kentucky University

One afternoon not long ago, I spent a few hours looking closely at a set of baskets, remarkable artifacts of limited distribution but significant history. These were



coiled and sewn baskets of sweetgrass, pine needle, and palmetto made by black women only in the vicinity of

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People You Should Meet

In fall of 1979 the Committee recruited a group of Montana scholars in the humanities and trained them to help citizens' groups develop proposals for public humanities projects. This began our field humanist program, designed for communities far from humanities institutions, yet eager to sponsor humanities programs. This is how it works: Following a request from a nonprofit citizens group, MCH assigns the group an appropriate field humanist as a consultant. Travel, per diem, and consulting fees are paid with MCH grant funds after the field humanist reports his services.

The Committee is pleased that this relatively inexpensive effort has succeeded and flourished. Success, of course, rests squarely on the shoulders of the field humanists themselves. MCH thanks and commends these people. And in case you haven't met them, let us make some brief introductions here.

ALANNA BROWN is Director of the Honors Program at Montana State University. She received her doctorate in English Literature from the University of California at Santa Barbara in 1974 and specializes in the areas of Women's Studies, Victorian Studies and Shakespeare. She is a Danforth Associate and also has received two

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The War in Vietnam

For twelve years, Americans lived with the daily struggles of their sons and brothers fighting a largely unseen enemy in the jungles of Vietnam. Network television brought to millions of homes unforgettable images of the conflict that critic Michael Arlen called "the living-room war." The abundance of information, often confusing, created a division in public reaction to the war; instant communications dissolved the solidarity with which the country had faced previous conflicts. Debate on the nature, the causes, the rationale, the statistics, the morality and the legacy of the War was widespread. The Vietnam War profoundly and ineradicably influenced the subsequent course of political, social, cultural and economic life in the United States.

In October, 1983, the Public Broadcasting Service will present *Vietnam: A Television History*, a thirteen-part series on the course of the War in Southeast Asia. The series will trace Western involvement in Indochina from the colonial period through the 20th century and will illustrate the internal dissensions that drew foreign attention for over forty years.

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Benchmarks of Quality . . .

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humanities program and the priorities of individual state councils; tension between responsiveness to local issues and the desire for national impact; and tension between public concerns and scholarly standards.

For the most part, this tension is healthy. In fact, its absence could mean that state programs like MCH have congealed into just another federal program, just a means for dispensing funds to constituent groups. That isn't good enough. And so far, we believe it hasn't happened. Still, the NEH re-assessment indicates that even though state programs have "advanced mightily in ten years," we can improve. And we must, if for no other than financial reasons. Budget constrictions call for more focused work by state councils, that is, funding only activities that promise to be of the highest quality.

Of course our aim for quality goes deeper than a simple need to streamline our operations and thus cut expenses. As a consequence of our wish to achieve and maintain the highest possible standards for programs in the humanities, we want to know just where we might improve.

Looking hard at its state programs, NEH found some common failings we need to consider, not all of which rest directly on the shoulders of the state councils, however. For instance, Gibson admitted that the Division itself has not clearly stated a sound theoretical basis for the work we do, which, of course, has repercussions at the state level. Just what are we trying to accomplish? Why? How?

On the other hand, state councils have occasionally stressed quantity, numbers and audience figures, at the expense of quality and content, at times moving away from the scholarly core of the program. Many projects have been short-term, single shot efforts, with too little attention paid to programs for continuing involvement. Program quality has been uneven.

All this leads to the question, "How can we predict that projects we fund will be of the highest quality?" We can't. This is a high-risk undertaking. But Gibson lists some "benchmarks of quality" NEH uses to evaluate state humanities committees. The Committee will be using these criteria, put below as questions, for evaluating applications and completed programs.

1. Is the content of the project well rooted in one or more of the humanities disciplines listed in NEH's authorizing legislation?
2. Is the project based on a text or object of study? This could include literary, visual, oral, or artifactual texts or objects.
3. Does the project consider ways to engage all participants in critical thinking and interpretation and disciplined dialogue?
4. Does the project include an appropriate humanist or humanists who can stimulate critical thinking and direct purposeful discussion?
5. Will participation in the project advance the humanist's own scholarship? The best projects bring forth knowledge and create texts that contribute to the ongoing work of the humanists.
6. Does the project genuinely reach out to the participants by involving representatives of the target audience in its planning?

We at MCH want to strengthen the intellectual core of the activities we fund and to maintain consistently high standards. But evaluating grant applications and completed programs is difficult and complex. Gibson's guidelines may help direct our task or at least suggest to us others that will simplify it.

(See page 1 for a discussion of texts by the Chairman of the Kentucky Humanities Council.)

Meaningful Texts . . .

(Continued from Page 1)

Mount Pleasant, South Carolina. What is striking is that those baskets are probably the most African of all the crafts practiced by Afro-Americans. Their resemblance in form and structure to certain African baskets, both historical and contemporary, is uncanny. Once constructed by slaves for utilitarian purposes, the baskets have changed in function over their approximately three hundred years existence. Since the 1920's they have been sold from stands along the highway, primarily to travellers, no longer serving a specific domestic need but instead bolstering family finances. A 1978 estimate suggested that 1500 citizens of Mount Pleasant were involved in making the baskets; we counted more than thirty roadside stands, this in the winter. Again, only in Mount Pleasant are those baskets made.

Thinking about those baskets, I am struck by the centrality, yet plasticity, of the notion of text. To humanists, texts are artifacts of human thought and history, the visible evidence of the elusive and tantalizing stuff of humanity. In one sense, the humanities council is primarily concerned with texts—their creation, discussion, and dissemination. I wonder, though, how many humanists would consider one of those humble baskets a text? Might an apparently simple artifact signify, be meaningful? The baskets embody the values of their producers; they are artifacts of a culture. Symmetrical, balanced, they use what is available to make something which is unavailable. In transforming the natural to the hand-made, they develop apposite aesthetic shape. As daughter learns from mother, maintaining several centuries of informal instruction, community and family history travel the conduit of the generations. Part of what is beautiful, part of what is entailed in belonging to a family and a community, and a portion of one's identity are bound up in each of the baskets. As we learn to read texts that have no words, we are enriched; we strengthen a fundamental pluralistic notion of our species.

The concept of text is likely to become even more central—and possibly more controversial—in the state humanities programs during the coming few years. The councils, scarcely a decade old, were an adventurous experiment on the part of the federal government to

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Meaningful Texts . . .

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build valuable bridges between the academic community and the general public through the encouragement and mediation of citizens' committees working with small staffs to regrant funds from the National Endowment for the Humanities. In Kentucky we have helped build those bridges using many sorts of construction techniques, working long and hard to devise ways to reach as wide a range of constituencies as possible. Last year saw well over six hundred KHC-sponsored programs involving citizens from virtually everywhere in the state. In facing the likelihood of reduced federal funding, we find that we are rich in experience, and we have been grappling with the issue of how to maintain, even increase, the quality of our programs, albeit with lessened resources. As we look to the future, we ought to affirm again the importance of texts and remind ourselves of their myriad forms. Might a poem and a plow, a quilt and a quarto, a novel and a novena, and even a humble basket, together help us comprehend ourselves?

People You Should Meet . . .

(Continued from Page 1)

National Endowment for the Humanities awards: a fellowship in residence at Columbia University to study "The Maintenance of Equality and Inequality in Human Society," and a summer seminar appointment to examine "The Woman as Hero: Studies in Female Selfhood in British and American Fiction." Moreover, she has attended the Summer Institute for Women in Higher Education Administration at Bryn Mawr College and is active in the Montana ACE/NIP and HERS/West programs. She has spoken broadly on a number of issues and has been active as a moderator, panelist, speaker, and evaluator in MCH programs since first coming to Montana in 1973. Since 1979, she has served as a Field Humanist consultant.

RICHARD CHAPMAN has worked with MCH since the early 1970s as a planning consultant, evaluator, proposal writer, conference sponsor, speaker and panelist. He earned a B.A. from UC Berkeley, M.A. from San Jose State College, and Ph.D. from UCLA, all three degrees in political science. From 1965-80 he taught political science at University of Montana. During that time he also taught in the general humanities program and served with an ad hoc group to design, plan and conduct the Round River Experiment in environmental education. He recently worked in California as a communications consultant, conducting management surveys and analyses, teaching seminars in organization leadership and group dynamics. He is now a consultant and free-lance writer in Missoula.

PHILLIP FANDOZZI joined the University of Montana philosophy faculty in 1971. Born in Pittsburg, he took both his B.A. and M.A. in philosophy from University of Pittsburg, then taught a year at Poitiers, France, as part of University of Maryland's European division. He completed his Ph.D. in philosophy at University of Hawaii in 1974. Philosophy of technology, existentialism and humanities interest him particularly, but he also teaches courses in ethics, introduction to and history of philosophy, philosophy in literature, among others. Since 1975 Phil has served MCH on three different panels: "To What Extent Should the State be Involved in the Arts and Creative Expression?" (1975), "Art is Communication" (nine presentations, 1979-80), and "Architecture and Community" (1981). His publications include an article, "Art in a Technological Society," and a forthcoming book, *Nihilism and Technology*.

RODNEY FREY has been assistant professor and director of Native American studies and anthropology programs at Carroll College since 1980, after having earned his B.A. and M.A. in anthropology from Colorado State, his Ph.D. at University of Colorado. During his years as a graduate student, he taught anthropology at Warren Air Force Base in Wyoming and at University of Colorado, where he also taught in the religious studies department. Although he teaches courses across the anthropology spectrum, the larger part of his professional activities—teaching, writing, speaking and service—deal with American Indian religion, culture and contemporary problems. In 1981 he conceived, organized and directed an interdisciplinary symposium on Indian story-telling, a subject he explored in a four-lecture series in 1980. He has been the organizer of several MCH-funded programs, and is also a contributor to the MCH's speakers bureau. Rodney's other interests include photography, ink and brush drawing, graphic design and sculpturing in both wood and clay.

WILLIAM FURDELL, a history professor at College of Great Falls, has been an evaluator and field humanist for MCH since 1977. He's taken part in many humanities programs, most recently in 1982 as panelist in the Montana History Conference and as planner/participant in the Families and Work Conference. In 1981 NEH funded a series of six lectures he gave on "The Great Plains Experience." Bill received his Ph.D. from Kent State in 1970, after getting his B.A. from Gannon College and his M.A. from University of Dayton. With three degrees in hand and 20 years' teaching experience, he recently returned to student life at University of Montana to take, in 1982, an M.B.A. degree.

DAVID KARNOS has been an MCH field humanist since 1980, and in that capacity he recently served as an evaluator for Montana Coalition for Criminal Justice Conference in Billings. Since 1977 he has taught philosophy and humanities at Eastern Montana College. He graduated in philosophy from UC Santa Cruz and went on for his M.A. and Ph.D. (philosophy and art education) at Pennsylvania State. His activities and interests range from phenomenology to wine making, film to ceramics. He has worked extensively in the field of gerontology, teaching courses and coordinating EMC's gerontology curriculum. Also interested in the women's movement, Dave planned and conducted

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People You Should Meet . . .

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three workshops (1978, 1979 and 1980) collectively entitled "A Woman's Forum." One recent paper, which he read to the November, 1980, MCH Conference on Work in the 80s, indicates still another interest: "Come, Let Us Make a Profit Together: Philosophic Reflections on the Restaurant Business."

MICHAEL KREISBERG is by training a college teacher of literature and the humanities and taught for five years in the English department at University of Montana. He is now an independent consultant in Missoula. In addition, he does a regular commentary on KUFM and considerable writing and speaking on civil liberties and foreign policy issues. He's had a leadership role in both state and local ACLU and in Central American solidarity work. Another of Michael's commitments, to wilderness and wildlife, has attracted him to a mountain cabin on Butler Creek near Missoula where he's lived for the past 12 years.

REX MYERS, besides chairing the Montana Oral History Association and directing the Museum Association of Montana, teaches history and chairs the Division of Humanities and Social Sciences at Western Montana College. Before joining the faculty there he was reference librarian for three years at the Montana Historical Society in Helena, and prior to that taught at Palo Verde College in California, where, in 1973, he was named Outstanding Instructor. From 1967-71, while working on his M.A. and Ph.D. degrees, he taught courses in United States history and world history at University of Montana. Currently his interests focus on transportation history and social history in Montana and the American west. One of his books, *Montana: Our Land and People*, written with Bill Lang of the Montana Historical Society, serves as the text for Montana history in schools across the state. Rex has been one of our field humanists since 1979.

THOMAS ROGERS, our field humanist from Montana College of Mineral Science and Technology, is an associate professor in humanities and social sciences. He majored in mathematics with a philosophy minor at Portland State University. Then for several years while doing graduate work at both UC Berkeley and San Francisco State, he taught high school mathematics. By the time he finished his Ph.D. in 1974 at Indiana University, he'd somewhat reversed his fields, making math his minor, philosophy of science his major. So now, though he still teaches mathematics, his teaching specialties also include philosophy of science, philosophy of technology, logic, human values and ethics, in particular environmental, business and professional ethics. Before coming to Montana in 1977, he spent two years as a post-doctoral fellow at Australian National University, Canberra, where he has a book being published, *Preference Theory and Voting*.

JENNIFER SCHOLES teaches sociology, law enforcement and anthropology at Dawson Community College in Glendive. She received a B.S. in sociology from Montana State University in 1978 and an M.A. in sociology from Bowling Green State University (Ohio) in 1982. Experienced in social work dealing with child abuse, Jennifer now works with the Dawson County Spouse Abuse Task Force. She also volunteers with the ACTION Advisory Committee for the local food bank, and is a charter member of Glendive's own ITWA (It's Those Women Again). In a more scholarly vein are her two published articles (co-authored with Paul Lawson of MSU), "Legal Repression of American Indians: Criminal Law and the Native American Church," and "Jurisprudence, Peyote and the Native American Church."

WILLIAM THACKERAY has taught for 18 years at Northern Montana College where, in 1958, he graduated with a B.S. in English. In 1965, the year he received his M.S. in English and philosophy from University of Utah, he also finished 10 years of inactive and active military service with the 19th Special Forces Group (Airborne). In the last 10 years he has directed four Indian studies conferences at Northern, the most recent being in February of this year. His publications, all of which deal with American Indians, reveal his particular interest in their unique problems.

Now that you've "met" our field humanists, you can understand why we at MCH feel lucky to have this versatile and representative crew. But please don't think that their impressive credentials make them unapproachable. Their purpose is to help you. They want to help you, so feel comfortable about calling or writing us to obtain their assistance.

Vietnam . . .

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TOPICS

In the *Vietnam* series the Committee for the Humanities sees an opportunity to spark local consideration of some of the issues that led to and arose out of that war as well as opportunities to consider issues of peace and war in contemporary societies and throughout history. Projects must be solidly grounded in scholarly analysis or research. The Committee does not fund advocacy programs.

Examples of appropriate project themes include, but are by no means limited to:

- a more complete history of Southeast Asia than the television series provides;
- the history of American foreign policy;
- the interrelation of philosophy and war from Plato to Hobbes to Russell;
- an examination of dissent and civil disobedience, historically and philosophically;
- the literature of war—Homer, Cervantes, Shakespeare, Tolstoy, Mailer—and some that came out of Vietnam;
- the fallout from Vietnam on American popular culture;
- the linguistic legacy of wars, especially the Vietnam War;

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Calendar of Forthcoming MCH Events

DATE	LOCATION	GRANT TITLE
October 5, 1983	Bozeman—City Center Motel	"Going Out West to See the Elephant"
October 11, 1983	Kalispell—FVCC	"Thinking Positive About the Negative: A Wishful Vision of Our Very Long Run"
October 15, 1983	Billings—Billings Parmly Library	"Why Are the Russians so Different?"
October 27-29, 1983	Helena—Carroll College	"Tenth Annual Montana History Conference"
October 29-30, 1983	Bozeman—Willson School Auditorium	"Mountains, Myths, and Magic: A Film Festival"
November 3-30, 1983	Bozeman—To be announced	"Bozeman Centennial Women's History Project" exhibits
November 4, 1983	Bozeman—MSU	"The Butcher, the Baker, the Candlestick Maker and Martin Luther"
November 19, 1983	Billings—Billings Parmly Library	"Thinking Positive about the Negative: A Wishful Vision of Our Very Long Run"
December 10, 1983	Billings—Yellowstone Art Center	"Art as Propaganda"
April, 1984	Miles City, Bozeman, Billings, Missoula, Great Falls, Helena, Colstrip	"The Human Side of Energy: Stories from Rosebud County"

Vietnam . . .

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- the impact of the media on public perceptions of the War and, conversely, the effects of the War on American journalism.

FORMATS

Proposed projects should provide opportunities for thoughtful analysis of the War and its implications in historical perspective, and should address a broad audience representing many points of view. The project must centrally involve the disciplines of the humanities. Eligible organizations may apply to the Committee for funds for a variety of activities, including, but not limited to, after-program lecture/discussions; conferences; film series; radio or television call-in discussions following each TV episode; music, readings, or theatre, accompanied by commentary, dealing with the issues of peace and war; scholarly reviews of the program for local newspapers. The proposal should describe how the chosen format will lead to the desired goals of reaching a broad public and stimulating serious study of the issues it considers.

(This article has been adapted from material provided by the Rhode Island Committee for the Humanities. Thanks to RICH for sharing it with Montana.)

INTERPRETING LOCAL CULTURE AND HISTORY is the focus of a series of regional conferences and exhibitions sponsored by the Idaho State Historical Society and Association for the Humanities in Idaho. 1982 events will be held in Boise (September 24 and 25) and Coeur d' Alene (November 5 and 6). These activities are designed for community groups and individuals interested in local culture and history.

Each two-day event is comprised of forums for discussion and presentation of interpretive concerns. The conference component on the first day emphasizes three topics: 1) New Perspectives in Interpretation; 2) Evaluating Oral Materials; and 3) Reconsidering Our Cultural Stereotypes. Boise speakers include Thomas Schlereth, Jan Brunvand, Bill Lang, Thomas Edwards, Jeff Simmonds, Sue Armitage, and Patricia Ourada. In Coeur d' Alene, major participants include Barre Toelken, Allan Comp, LeRoy Ashby, Laurie Mercier, Sherry Boswell, Paul Barkley, and Alan Marshall. The second-day exhibition focuses on the public display of exhibits, publications, and folklife presentations. Informal interaction between participants and audience will be melded with forums for formal discussion of interpretive concerns. There is no charge for any activity.

For more information, write Sandy Rikoon, Idaho State Historical Society, 610 North Julia Davis Drive, Boise, Idaho, 83702.

The Navigators

"The Navigators," a one-hour documentary film, funded in part by a grant from the Hawaii Committee for the Humanities (HCH), will be shown nationally by the Public Broadcasting System (PBS) on **October 3, 1983.**

"The Navigators" recreates one of the greatest navigational feats in human history: the exploration and settlement of Polynesia by navigated voyages more than 1,000 years ago. The film features the achievements of the Polynesian people through representation of Polynesian life as it might have been a millenium ago, including demonstration of how Polynesian navigators traveled up to 3,000 miles in open sea using the stars, winds, currents and other natural elements to guide their navigation.

"The Navigators" was underwritten by Pacific Resources, Inc. (PRI), a Honolulu based energy company, and by a grant from the Hawaii Committee for the Humanities (HCH). The HCH also provided funds for an educational component, including a Teacher's Guide and a television-supplement Viewers' Guide.

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*** Appointed by Governor Schwinden.**

Grant Summary

The following grants have been awarded since our last Newsletter:

How the American System Works, sponsored by the Missoula City-County Health Department. $150.

Heartland, sponsored by the Polson Branch of the AAUW. $165.60.

Going Out West to See the Elephant, sponsored by the Big Timber Women's Club. $339.12.

A Week of Heritage, sponsored by the Western Heritage Center, Billings.

Heartland, sponsored by the First United Methodist Church and Friends of the Library, Polson. $10.

If We Are Women We Think Back Through Our Mothers, sponsored by the Montana Women's History Project, Women's Resource Center, University of Montana. $95.

Jeannette Rankin: The Peace Tradition, sponsored by the Montana Women's History Project, Women's Resource Center, University of Montana. $170.

Inspirations of Pen and Palette, sponsored by the AAUW, Beaverhead County Museum, City of Dillon Library, and the Shakespeare Club. $3,399.88.

National Security Speaker Series, sponsored by the Montana League of Women Voters. $1,064.56.

Women and Family in Prairie/Plains Settlement Literature, sponsored by the League of Women Voters of Liberty County, and the Chester Lionnettes. $174.80.

Representative Scientists, sponsored by Northern Montana College. $150.

How the American System Works, sponsored by Malta High School. $178.00.

Antecedents of the Current Literary Renaissance in Montana, sponsored by the Central Montana Historical Association. $223.65.

Going Out West to See the Elephant, sponsored by the West Yellowstone Foundation of the Arts. $376.00.

The Eye Juggler: Storytelling and the Living Culture of the Montana Indians, sponsored by the Montana Historical Society. $150.00.